

REPORT TO: Executive Board

DATE: 16 June 2022

REPORTING OFFICER: Operational Director – Policy, Planning and Transportation

PORTFOLIO: Environment and Urban Renewal

SUBJECT: East Runcorn Connectivity (ERC) Scheme Development

WARDS: All

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 This report seeks approval for further feasibility work (Year 2) on the business case for the East Runcorn Connectivity (ERC) Scheme (this follows the Year 1 programme approved by the Executive Board in June 2021). The full ERC scheme comprises four elements:

- A558 Dualling from Pitts Heath Lane to Innovation Way
- A56 Major Maintenance- Keckwick Lane to M56 Junction 11
- Potential loop road M56 J11 to A533
- A suite of active and sustainable travel interventions.

1.2 Funding is available from the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority to develop this project further.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Executive Board

- Approve the further development of the East Runcorn Connectivity business case.
- Approve the Year 2 programme as set out in Appendix 1.
- Approve the amendment of the Council's Capital Programme to incorporate Year 2 sum of £2.71m.
- Approve the principle of commissioning of Mott MacDonald as external consultant for the project via the Merseytravel Consultancy Framework to 2025.
- Delegate power to the Operational Director (PPT), in consultation with the Leader and Portfolio Holder Environment and Urban Renewal, to implement the Year 2 Works on the East Runcorn Connectivity Scheme within funding deadlines.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 In April 2022, the Liverpool City Region received confirmation of £710m CRSTS funding. This funding covers the next five years transport settlement. A component of this funding is to be used to support building longer-term local transport planning and delivery capacity, this funding is only to be used for transport priorities.

3.2 The five year capital settlement to the LCRCA is as follows;

2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
£138,004,000	£142,999,000	£142,999,000	£142,999,000	£142,999,000

3.3 As part of the Liverpool City Region's 'Transport Pipeline', the East Runcorn Connectivity Scheme is an ambitious scheme that will support the delivery of new homes and employment opportunities by providing a resilient, sustainable transport corridor within the East of Runcorn. This area is home to the Enterprise Zone, a number of business parks and emerging large housing sites and the scheme will significantly enhance the existing transport network in the Borough.

3.4 The full ERC scheme is made up of four elements

- Widening of the A558 Daresbury Expressway from the junction of Pitts Heath Lane to Innovation Way, taking into account four structures and canal.
- The major maintenance of the A56 from the junction at Keckwick Lane to M56 Junction 11. New construction of existing road due to failing condition.
- The introduction of a direct cycle superhighway from the Pitts Heath Lane Junction to the existing A56 cycle corridor connecting Halton with Warrington and a number of sustainable transport improvements.
- Potential new loop road connecting M56 J11 at Preston Brook to the A533, which will relieve congestion and create future opportunity to release development land.

3.5 This project supports the emerging Local Plan with the development of necessary infrastructure to support development land allocations. Elements of the project are referred to in Halton's Local Transport Plan 3 and are justified by technical analysis work found in the East Runcorn Sustainable Transport Study and the recent Halton Local Plan Transport Network Impacts Study. These studies identified highway capacity improvements and sustainable transport improvements would be required to enable a successful delivery of the proposed Local Plan allocations.

3.6 The findings of the East Runcorn Sustainable Transport Study were confirmed with the recent Halton Local Plan Transport Network impacts study which highlighted capacity issues at the following locations:

- A56
- Pitts Heath Lane
- A558 and

- A533

- 3.7 In line with East Runcorn Sustainable Transport Study, S.106 contributions will be secured from developments in the area towards transport improvements. However due to the scale of these infrastructure projects further funding will need to be sought from the LCRCA to deliver the required infrastructure and other improvements.
- 3.8 Due to the size and complexity of the project an overarching Business Plan along with four individual scheme business plans over the project lifetime (10years) will be produced. Officers will establish a project board which is to oversee the East Runcorn Connectivity Scheme.
- 3.9 The Year Two proposal for funding has been submitted to the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority. The value of the submission is £9m over four years, with Halton's year two request of £2.71m. Halton is now in receipt of an offer letter to support Year 2 with pre-development funding. This ensures that a robust Business Case is developed which meets the Governments Green Book and Webtag appraisal mechanisms, whilst meeting the objectives of the Liverpool City Region's Transport Growth Strategy.
- 3.10 Given the existing involvement of Mott MacDonald in the production of the East Runcorn Sustainable Transport Study and the Liverpool City Region Transport Model (upon which the Halton Local Plan Transport Network impacts study was based) together with Mott MacDonald's extensive involvement with the Structures Maintenance Programme, it is intended to award Mott MacDonald the Year Two programme under the Merseytravel Consultancy Framework. The value of the work to be committed to Mott MacDonald is £754,000.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The significant investment described in this report is directed by the Council's strategic policies of: the Local Plan, the Mersey Gateway Plus Regeneration Strategy, Local Transport Plan 3, Local Cycle and Walking Infrastructure Plan, and aligns itself with the priorities of the Liverpool City Region.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The full ERC scheme is a 10 year project. Pre development funding has been obtained in the previous 2 years, 2020-2022. Further LCRCA funding will be required from June 2022 to continue to develop each of the schemes project business cases. An application for the initial year 2 development costs for £2.7m has been submitted to the LCRCA and a funding offer received with a reviewed project spend profile to 2025/6 also submitted in total a 4 year budget of £9m is indicatively required.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 Children and Young People in Halton

Indirect benefits will stem from an improved physical environment for local communities and better transport connectivity and travel choices.

6.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

There are strong prospects of new business and job creation, providing a more resilient, sustainable transport corridor, connecting residents in Halton and the LCR to employment and learning opportunities at the Enterprise Zone and neighbouring business parks.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

The projects will deliver improved active travel linkages by providing a direct Cycle Superhighway completing the cycle network from the Silver Jubilee Bridge to the A56. As part of the project there is an opportunity to develop a Zero Emission Refuelling Centre (ZERC) supporting local businesses to transition their fleet over to cleaner energy sources such as electric and hydrogen thereby support the councils emerging climate change strategy.

6.4 A Safer Halton

Upon completion, the projects will provide a more resilient, safer, and well connected routes within East Runcorn and our town centres for cyclists and pedestrians.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The combination of projects will support an improved urban environment to existing and future residents, businesses and visitors by enabling currently constrained areas to become more accessible.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

All large highway projects have associated project risks with uncertainty arising from various aspects of the process, such as securing funding, land acquisition, stakeholders, fluctuating prices, severe weather, consents, environment factors, ecology assessments. These risks may lead to increased project delivery timescales and costs. These risks will be identified as the scheme develops and highlighted in the development of the Options Appraisal Reports for the various elements. The project team will work to reduce and mitigate these as the detailed business case/s evolve.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

There are no Equality and Diversity implications arising from this report.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Halton Local Plan Transport Network impacts study Jonathan Farmer

<https://www3.halton.gov.uk/Pages/planning/policyguidance/eip.aspx>

East Runcorn Sustainable Transport Study – Jonathan Farmer

<https://www3.halton.gov.uk/Pages/planning/policyguidance/PolicyBackgroundDocuments.aspx>

[x](#)

Delivery and Allocations Local Plan – Alasdair Cross

<https://www3.halton.gov.uk/Pages/planning/policyguidance/planningplans.aspx>

Appendix 1

Year 2 Outline of Programme Activity - East Runcorn Connectivity

Key items on the Year 2 Programme:

DEW (Daresbury Expressway Widening)

- Initial outline geotechnical design of earthworks, highway design, and bridge structure design for the new carriageway
- Public consultation on the proposals
- Environmental surveys and mitigation measures
- Identifying land requirements
- Development of the schemes contribution to the business case for the programme

WAL;(Whitehouse Access Links)

- Develop a local action plan for the development of the Preston on the Hill area
- Undertake public consultation on the the scheme proposals and the local action plan
- Initial outline highway design
- Undertake surveys including Topographical, utility and drainage surveys
- Development of the schemes contribution to the business case for the programme

A56;

- Develop ground improvement and pavement replacement design
- Develop highways design including drainage, street lighting and utilities
- Development of the schemes contribution to the business case for the programme
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ATM (Active Travel Modes)

- Undertake site survey work, including; Topographical, utility and drainage
- Develop alignment designs and junction tie-ins
- Identify land requirements
- Undertake further consultations on the proposals

The Full ERC Scheme Comprises the following elements:

- Daresbury Expressway Widening
- A56 Major Maintenance
- Cycle and Walking infrastructure
- Loop Road Preston on the Hill/Preston Brook

A558 Daresbury Expressway Widening (DEW)

The A558 Daresbury Expressway between Pitts Heath Lane and Innovation Way junction is a single two-lane all-purpose carriageway. From Innovation Way to the A56 junction the road is a dual two-lane all-purpose carriageway. This scheme proposal, referred to as the Daresbury Expressway Widening (DEW), is to increase the capacity of the A558 to a dual two-lane all-purpose carriageway between Pitts Heath Lane and Innovation Way.

Whitehouse Access Link Road (WAL)

The Whitehouse Access Link Road (WAL) is a proposed new access link road into the Whitehouse Industrial Estate to be constructed off the A56 to the south of the M56 near Preston Brook. This new road would realise access to land that, subject to the outcome of an on-going consultation, would be safeguarded for development (land use type to be determined at future planning stages). The alignment of this road and the location of tie-ins to the existing road network are yet to be determined.

A56 Highway Repairs (A56)

As a result of known structural defects in the carriageway construction, Halton has had to fund regular but temporary surface repairs to maintain the A56 highway in a safe condition. The extents of these defects are between the A56's junction with Red Brow Lane (just north of M56 junction 11) and an un-named access road approximately 100m north-east of the A56's junction with the A558 Daresbury Expressway. This surface repair approach, however, does not address the root cause of the problem and requires repeated repair works, approximately every 10 years. The deteriorating road surface presents safety issues and the rate of deterioration may be accelerated in the near future with the completion of the recently funded Warrington Western Link which is expected to lead to an increase in traffic volumes. This scheme seeks to identify and implement a sustainable, long term solution to the issues encountered along this section of the highway network, in order to provide safe and reliable journeys for users

Active Modes and Ancillary Works (ATM)

A number of proposed improvements to active modes and sustainable transport are proposed under the Active Modes and Ancillary Works (ATM) scheme. These proposals require further study to investigate their feasibility and locations or alignments within the study area. The proposed measures being considered by this scheme are:

- New cycling and walking routes through the east and south east Runcorn areas, with connection to Runcorn centre. This would include improvements to existing facilities and a wider strategy of connectivity and usability.
- A 'Zero Emission Recharging Centre' (ZERC) combining electric and hydrogen vehicle charging on a single site. These sites would enable rapid recharging of vehicles as part of an in-journey stop, rather than at a residential or commercial property. Although the lay-over times would be different, the use cases for such recharging centres are similar to conventional refuelling stations